

Signal Projects and Historic Preservation Compliance

Information for Project Development Engineers

If you are assigned a TIP Project that centers on signal upgrades, such as computerized traffic signal systems for municipalities, please follow these procedures to expedite completion of the environmental document. These procedures should help meet the typically compressed schedules and ensure compliance with local, state, and federal laws pertaining to historic preservation. The process was developed cooperatively by NCDOT's Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) & Signals Unit of the Traffic Engineering & Safety Systems Branch, the Historic Architecture Group and Project Development Unit of the Project Development & Environmental Analysis (PDEA) Branch, and the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO).

These procedures apply to TIP Signal Projects that require either a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion or Categorical Exclusion (PCE or CE documents) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), however, they only cover the review of historic structures and districts, not archaeological sites.

- PDEA Project Development Engineers will submit an Environmental Input Request (EIR) to the Human Environment Unit, attention Historic Architecture Group, at the time they receive the project. Please include a map of the project area and a basic description of the work, provided by ITS personnel. The Historic Architecture Group will determine what areas of the project are within historic districts or adjacent to historic properties.
- If there are no historic properties in the area, the Historic Architecture Group will send a memo to the HPO and Project Development Engineer noting Section 106 and GS 121-12(a)¹ are satisfied and no further investigations are required for historic properties.
- If signal work is proposed within a historic district or adjacent to a historic property, the Historic Architecture Group will notify the HPO, local historic preservation organizations as well as the Project Development Engineer and ITS and provide them the location(s) of the potentially affected properties.
- Subsequently, ITS will provide the Historic Architecture Group with detailed plans that illustrate the location and type of work planned within or adjacent to historic properties.
- If the work includes placement of new signal items such as poles, cabinets, mast arms, or other work that could cause an effect on a historic property, the Historic Architecture Group will schedule an effects meeting with the HPO and invite Project Development Engineer, ITS, and other consulting parties (such as local preservation organizations) to attend.
- If the Project Development Engineer or ITS do not attend the meeting, the Historic Architecture Group will notify ITS and the Project Development Engineer immediately if the proposed project is determined to have an effect on historic

¹ Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and North Carolina General Statute 121-12(a)

properties or if commitments need to be discussed. If not, a memo to the Project Development Engineer and ITS will suffice, noting a designation of “No Effect.” This notification should take place prior to the 90% ITS and Signals plan development (typically 5 to 6 months prior to Letting) to allow time for redesign if necessary.

- If the scope of the project changes at any time during the document preparation, the PDEA Project Engineer should notify the Historic Architecture Group to determine whether or not a re-evaluation of the project area is necessary
- ITS will begin including a note on signal plansheets similar to:

This area has been determined to contain properties with documented historic significance. If it is necessary to deviate from these plans in this area, please alert the Engineer to contact Project Development And Environmental Analysis Branch-Historic Architecture Group of the North Carolina Department of Transportation for an effects determination before proceeding.

- Also, verbiage should be added to the environmental document that states:
“Coordination has taken place with the Historic Architecture Group of PDEA to assure that this project will have **No Effect** or **No Adverse Effect** on historic properties. If the scope of work changes so that the approved plans will require even minor deviations, the Resident Engineer should contact the Historic Architecture Group if the deviations fall within a historic district or adjacent to a historic property before proceeding with any work.